

EPA REGION 3 ENVIRO-BYTES

A Wrap-Up of Issues & Events in EPA's Mid-Atlantic Region
January 3, 2001

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RAIL CARS SPILL SULFURIC ACID ON PHILLY ROADWAY

A December 12 train derailment caused the spill of 12,000 gallons of sulfuric acid onto Kelly Drive, a major thoroughfare through Philadelphia. The road was shut down temporarily while crews began to clean up the spill. Soil around the spill is being excavated and a contamination study is being conducted to trace the extent of the damage. A broken storm sewer in the area acted as a conduit for the sulfuric acid. EPA has issued an administrative consent order to CSX Transportation, the company that owns the rail cars. The order requires the contamination study and restoration of the area.

WATER SAMPLING IN EASTWICK NEIGHBORHOOD

EPA is working with the Philadelphia Water Department to sample drinking water in private residences near the proposed Lower Darby Creek Superfund site. The Philadelphia Water Department attended a community briefing held by the EPA on December 20 in order to address questions concerning drinking water quality. As a result of community concerns, EPA conducted soil and water sampling in and around the nearby Clearview Landfill. The water department conducted a water quality investigation on December 6 in the neighborhood at four locations, and all tests for mercury were nondetects. The residents have agreed to disclose their

addresses and the water department has a tentative plan to sample one or more of the three residences during the week of January 1.

FOREST BUFFERS INCREASING AROUND THE CHESAPEAKE BAY

Between 1996 and October 2000, 711 miles of streamside and shoreline forests were restored. In 2000 alone, over 300 miles were restored. This is important because it clearly shows that the pace of restoration is increasing, and that programs such as the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program as well as new public/private partnerships are producing results on the land. The Chesapeake Bay Program has committed to restoring 2,010 miles by 2010. The program has also committed to conserving existing forest along all streams and shorelines. Stream corridor protection at the local level and efforts on federal lands are seen as the major components to accomplish conservation. Approximately 59% of the basin's streambank and shoreline are currently buffered by riparian forests.

MICE MAY TRIGGER ASTHMA

Doctors who previously identified cockroaches as the leading contributor to asthma attacks in urban America now say that mice may be the second-worst offender. The rodents, which spread allergens in their urine and dander, probably play a more important role in triggering asthma attacks than do dust mites, dogs and cats, scientists say. Scientists who gathered and analyzed dust from households in seven U.S. cities, including Baltimore, found the mouse allergens in 95 percent of the homes. The homes were generally in poor neighborhoods and were typically part of multiple dwelling units where the whole building is infested. Also, most were rental properties where the landlords did little to help solve the problem.

EPA ANNOUNCES HEAVY DUTY DIESEL RULE

On December 21 EPA Administrator Carol Browner announced a major action that will provide the cleanest running heavy-duty trucks and buses in history. Under this action, these vehicles will be 95 percent cleaner than today's trucks and buses. To ensure cleaner-running trucks and buses, today's action also requires that sulfur in diesel fuel be reduced by 97 percent. By addressing diesel fuel and engines together as a single system, this action will produce the clean-air equivalent of eliminating air pollution from 13 million of today's trucks.

EPA PUTS MARJOL CLEANUP ON HOLD PENDING OMBUDSMAN'S REVIEW

Senator Arlen Specter announced on December 19 the suspension of

the implementation of the cleanup decision for the Marjol Battery hazardous waste site in Throop, Pa. The decision was put on hold until March 31, 2001 at which time the EPA's ombudsman will have completed his consultation on the site. The cleanup remedy for the site is to consolidate most of the contaminated soil and contain it under a 10-acre cap. Some community members have called for total excavation and removal of the soil. This difference of approach will be the subject of the ombudsman's review.

HARRISBURG, PA INCINERATOR CLOSES FOR NOW

The Harrisburg incinerator shut down at midnight, December 19 to comply with federal regulations. EPA is currently in discussions with the City of Harrisburg and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection over the terms under which the incinerator could start up again on a smaller scale.

EPA PROPOSES PLAN FOR TWO WV WATERSHEDS

The proposed "total maximum daily load" plan for the Cheat and Tygart watersheds was made available to the general public for comments starting December 15. This plan addresses the largest area in a single plan - - two watersheds with 109 streams. The plan, which will govern how much more pollution loads can be added to each waterway, was developed with input from key West Virginia stakeholders.

BALTIMORE AND NORFOLK TO SCRAP MORE NAVY SHIPS

Baltimore Marine Industries Inc. has won a \$4.1 million deal to scrap seven Navy ships. The seven vessels include four from Norfolk and three from Philadelphia. All are wooden-hulled ships. Metro Machine Corp. of Norfolk won a contract to dismantle a steel-hulled cruiser. Each shipyard dismantled one ship last year under a new federal pilot program for scrapping old Navy vessels.

GLENDENING PLEDGES \$750 MILLION MORE FOR TRANSIT

Maryland Gov. Parris Glendening announced last week that he plans to spend \$750 million over six years on mass transit projects. The Glendening proposal will include the purchase of new buses, the addition of new bus routes, and the lowering of bus fares to \$1.10 statewide. If the money is matched by Virginia and the District of Columbia, it would also pay for 50 rail cars and 300 buses for Washington Metro. In addition, commuters would be able to use "smart cards" to travel on public transportation throughout the state. Some bridge and highway tolls would go up

to pay for the increased services.